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SPEECH OF GERRIT SMITH.

It is natural, Mr. Chairman—nay, it is almost necessary—that, from the difference in our temperament, our education, our pursuits, and our circumstances, we should take different views of many a subject, which comes before us. But, if we are only kind in expressing these views, and patient in listening to them, no harm, but, on the contrary, great good, will come from our discussions.

As this is the first time I have had the floor, it may be well for me now to confess, that I am in the habit of freely imputing errors to my fellow-men. Perhaps, I shall fall into this habit on the present occasion. It may be a bad habit. But is it not atoned for by the fact, that I do not claim, that I am myself exempt from errors; that I acknowledge, that I abound in them ; and that I am ever willing, that those, whom I assail, shall make reprisals ? I trust, Sir, that so long as I shall have the honor to hold a seat in this body, I may be able to keep my spirit in a teachable posture, and to throw away my errors as fast as honorable gentlemen around me shall convince me of them.

I have risen, Mr. Chairman, to make some remarks on that portion of the President's Message, which it was proposed, a few moments since, to refer to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The Message endorses, fully and warmly, the conduct of the Administration in the case of Martin Koszta. For my own part, I cannot bestow unqualified praise on that conduct. Scarcely upon Capt. Ingraham can I bestow such praise. It is true, that I honor him for his brave and just determination to rescue Koszta, but I would have had him go a step farther than he did, and insist on Koszta's *abso-*

lute liberty. I would have had him enter into no treaty, and hold no terms, with kidnappers. I would have had him leave nothing regarding Koszta's liberty to the discretion of the French Consul or any other Consul; to the discretion of the French Government or any other Government. Koszta was an American subject—a kidnapped American subject—and hence the American Government was bound to set him, immediately and unconditionally, free. But Capt. Ingraham represented the American Government. For that occasion he was the American Government.

For saying what I have here said, I may appear very inconsistent in the eyes of many, who know my opposition to all war; for they may regard Capt. Ingraham as having been ready to wage war upon Austria—as having, indeed, actually threatened her with war. But, notwithstanding my opposition to all war, I defend Capt. Ingraham's purpose to use force, should force become necessary. I believe, that such purpose is in harmony with the true office of Civil Government. I hold, that an armed national police is proper, and that here was a fit occasion for using it, had moral influences failed. But to believe in this is not to believe in war. It is due to truth to add, that Capt. Ingraham should not be charged with designing war upon Austria. Why should he be thus charged? He had, properly, nothing whatever to do with Austria, nor with the Austrian Consul. There was no occasion for his doing with either of them, nor for his even thinking of either of them. For him to have supposed that Austria, or any of her authorities, could be guilty of kidnapping, would have been to insult her and them. He had to do only with the kidnappers, who were restraining Koszta of his liberty; and all he had to do with these kidnappers was to compel them to an unconditional and immediate surrender of their prey.

I will say, by the way, that I do not condemn the conduct of our Minister, Mr. Marsh, in relation to Koszta, for the good reason, that I am not sure what it was. If it was, as it is reported to have been, I trust that both the Administration and the whole country will condemn it.

It is denied in certain quarters, that Koszta was an American subject. But Secretary Marcy has argued triumphantly that, in the light of international law, he was. I regret, that he had not proceeded to argue it in other light

also. I regret, that he had not proceeded to show that, even if admitted international law is to the contrary, nevertheless, by the superior law of reason and justice, Koszta was an American subject. I regret, that he had not proceeded to publish to the world, that, when a foreigner becomes an inhabitant of this land; abjures allegiance to the Government he has left; and places himself under the protection of ours; the American Government will protect him, and that, too, whether with or without international law, and whether with the world or against the world. In a word, I regret, that the Secretary did not declare, that if international law shall not authorize the American Government to protect such a one, then American law shall. It is high time, that America should justify herself in such a case by something more certain and authoritative than European codes. It is high time, that she should base her justification, in such a case, on the immutable and everlasting principles of reason and justice.

I may be asked, whether I would allow, that the subject of a foreign Government, who is alleged to be charged with an offence, and who has fled to our country, can find shelter in his oath of allegiance to our Government? I answer, that I would not allow him to be kidnapped; and that, if his former Government wants him, it must make a respectful call on our Government for his extradition. I add, that I would have our Government the sole judge of the fact whether he is charged with an offence; and also the sole judge whether the offence with which he may be charged is a crime—a real and essential crime—for which he should be surrendered; or a merely conventional and nominal crime, for which he should not be surrendered.

A few words in regard to the charge, that Capt. Ingraham invaded the rights of a neutral State. It is to be regretted, that the Secretary did not positively and pointedly deny the truth of this charge. I admit, that no denial of it was needful to his argument with Mr. Hulsemann. The denial would, however, have been useful. No, Sir; Capt. Ingraham did not violate the rights of Turkey. But, although America cannot be justly charged with violating the rights of Turkey, Turkey nevertheless can be justly charged with violating the rights of America. She violated the rights of America, inasmuch as she failed to afford to Koszta the pro-

tection, which she owed him. If she is not fairly chargeable with permitting him to be kidnapped, she nevertheless is fairly chargeable with permitting him to remain kidnapped, and that is virtually the same thing. To say, that Capt. Ingraham violated the rights of Turkey, is nonsense. It is nonsense, if for no other reason, than that she had no rights in the case, to be violated. She had none, for the simple reason, that she suffered her laws to be silent. The only ground on which a neutral State can claim respect at the hands of belligerents is, that, so far as she is concerned, their rights are protected. If she allows injustice to them, then they may do themselves justice. If she refuses to use the law for them, then they may take it into their own hands. For Turkey to suspend her laws, as she did in the present case, is to leave to herself no ground of wonder or complaint, if a brave Capt. Ingraham supplies her lack of laws.

But I may be asked, whether I would really have had Capt. Ingraham fire into the Austrian ship? I answer, that I would have had him set Koszta free, cost what it might. At the same time, I admit, that there would have been blame, had it cost a single life; and that this blame would have rested, not upon the Turks and Austrians only, but upon our own countrymen also. This is so, for the reason, that neither our own country nor any other country is so fully identified with justice, in the eyes of all the world, as to make its character for justice an effectual substitute for violence—as to make, in a word, its character for justice its sufficient power to obtain justice. Were our country proverbial, the world over, for wisdom and goodness—were our love to God and man known and read of all men—were every nation to know that, both at home and abroad, our Government acts upon Christian principles—then no nation would wrong us, and no nation would let us be wronged. Then, if one of our people were kidnapped in a foreign land, as was Koszta, the Government of that land would promptly surrender him, at our request. It would pass upon our title to the individual confidingly and generously, rather than jealously and scrutinously. And even if it entertained much doubt of our title, it would nevertheless waive it, under the influence of its conviction, that we ask nothing, which we do not honestly believe to be our due,

and that our character is such, as richly to entitle us to all, that is possibly our due. Having such a character, our moral force would supersede the application of our physical force. Had physical force been needful to effect the deliverance of Koszta, it would have been needful merely because the American people and American Government lacked the moral character, or, in other words, the moral force, adequate to its deliverance. But, as I have already intimated, our nation is no more deficient in this respect than other nations.

I said, that I could not bestow unqualified praise on the Administration for its part in the Koszta affair. In one or two of those passages of rare rhetorical beauty in his letter to Mr. Hulsemann, Secretary Marcy insinuates the despotic character of Austria. Now, I will not say, that there was impudent hypocrisy in the insinuation; but I will say, that the insinuation was in bad taste, and that it was bad policy. A cunning policy would studiously avoid, in our diplomatic correspondence, all allusions to despotism and oppression, lest such allusions might suggest to the reader comparisons between our country and other countries, that would be quite unfavorable to us.

I admit, that Austria is an oppressor. But is it not equally true, and far more glaringly true, that America is a much greater and guiltier oppressor? Indeed, compared with our despotism, which classes millions of men, women, and children, with cattle, Austrian despotism is but as the little finger to the loins. Surely, surely, it will never be time for America to taunt Austria with being an oppressor, until the influence of American example is such, as to shame Austria out of her oppression, rather than to justify and confirm her in it.

In this same letter to the Representative of Austria, Mr. Marcy presumes to quote, as one of the justifications of Capt. Ingraham's conduct, the Divine law, *to do unto others as we would have others do unto us.* Now, was it not the very acme of presumption for the American Government to quote this law, while it surpasses every other Government in trampling it under foot? Did Mr. Marcy suppose Mr. Hulsemann to be stone-blind? Did he suppose, that Mr. Hulsemann had lived in the city of Washington so long, and yet had seen nothing of the buying and selling

of human beings as brutes, which is continually going on here, under the eye, and under the authority, of Government? Did he suppose, that Mr. Hulsemann could be ignorant of the fact, that the American Government is the great slave-catcher for the American slaveholders? Did he suppose him to be ignorant of the fact, that the great American slave-trade finds in the American Government its great patron; and that this trade is carried on, not only under the general protection, but under the specific regulations, of Congress? Did he suppose him to be ignorant of the fact, that many, both at the North and South, (among whom is the President himself,) claim, that American slavery is a national institution?—and made such by the American Constitution? It *is* a national institution. If not made such by our organic law, it is, nevertheless, made such by the enactments of Congress, the decisions of the Judiciary, and the acquiescence of the American People. And did Mr. Marcy suppose Mr. Hulsemann to be entirely unaware, that the present Administration surpasses all its predecessors in shameless pledges and devotion to the Slave Power? Certainly, Mr. Marcy fell into a great mistake, in presuming Mr. Hulsemann to be in total darkness on all these points. If, indeed, a mistake, it is a very ludicrous one. If but an affectation, it is too wicked to be ludicrous.

I referred, a moment since, to some of the evidences of the nationality of American slavery. It, sometimes, suits the slaveholders to claim, that their slavery is an exclusively State concern; and that the North has, therefore, nothing to do with it. But as well may you, when urging a man up-hill with a heavy load upon his back, and with your lash also upon his back, tell him, that he has nothing to do either with the load or the lash. The poor North has much to do with slavery. It staggers under its load and smarts under its lash.

But I must do Secretary Marcy and the Administration justice. What I have said, were I to stop here, would convey the idea, that, in his letter to Mr. Hulsemann, the Secretary inculcates the duty of *unconditional* obedience to the law, which requires us to do unto others, as we would have others do unto us. He is, however, very far from doing so. He remembers, as with paternal solicitude,

American slavery and the Fugitive Slave Act, and provides for their safety. To this end he qualifies the commandment of God, and makes it read, that we are to obey it, only when there is no commandment of man to the contrary. In a word, he adopts the American theology—that pro-slavery theology, which makes human Government paramount to the Divine, and exalts the wisdom and authority of man above the wisdom and authority of God.

I said, that I must do the Secretary justice: and I have now done it. But, in doing it, a piece of flagrant injustice has been brought to light. For what less than flagrant can I call his injustice to the Bible? The Secretary says, that this blessed volume "enjoins upon all men, everywhere, *when not acting under legal restraint*, to do unto others whatever they would, that others should do unto them." Now, the phrase "when not acting under legal restraint" is a sheer interpolation. The commandment, as we find it in the Bible, is without qualification—is absolute. The Administration is guilty, therefore, through its Secretary, of deliberately corrupting the Bible. Moreover, it is guilty of deliberately corrupting this authentic and sacred record of Christianity at the most vital point. For this commandment to do unto others as we would have others do unto us, is the sum total of the requirements of Christianity. I say so on the authority of Jesus Christ himself. For when He had given this commandment, He added: "for this is the law and the prophets."

I am not unmindful how strong a temptation the Administration was under, in this instance, to corrupt the Bible. I am willing to make all due allowance on that account. Strong, however, as was the temptation, it nevertheless should have been resisted. I am well aware, that for the Administration to justify the rescue of Koszta on the unqualified, naked Bible ground, of doing unto others as we would have others do unto us, would be to throw open the door for the rescue of every fugitive slave. It would be to justify the rescue of Shadrach at Boston. It would be to justify the celebrated rescue in my own neighborhood—I mean the rescue of Jerry at Syracuse. It would be to justify the bloody rescue at Christiana. For, not only is it true, that all men would be rescued from slavery, but it is also true, that very nearly all men would be rescued from

slavery, even at the expense of blood. I add, that for the Administration to justify on naked Bible ground the rescue of Koszta, would be, in effect, to justify the deliverance of every slave. Now, for, an Administration, that sold itself in advance to the Slave Power, and that is indebted for all its hopes and for its very being to that Power—for such an Administration to take the position of simple Bible truth, and thereby invite the subversion of all slavery, would be to practice the cruellest ingratitude. Such ingratitude could not fail to exasperate the Slave Power—that mighty and dominant Power, before which not only the Administrations of the American People, but the American People themselves, fall down as abjectly as did Nebuchadnezzar's people before the image, which he had set up. Nevertheless, however important it may be to maintain slavery, it is far more important to maintain Christianity; and the Administration is therefore to be condemned for giving up Christianity for slavery. I add, that, if American slavery is, as the famous John Wesley called it, "the sum of all villanies," then it is certainly a very poor bargain to exchange Christianity for it.

Sir, this doctrine of the Administration, that human enactments are paramount to Divine law, and that the Divine authority is not to be allowed to prevail against human authority, is a doctrine as perilous to man as it is dishonorable to God. In denying the supremacy of God, it annihilates the rights of man. I trust, that a better day will come, when all men shall be convinced, that human rights are not to be secured by human cunning and human juggles, but solely by the unfaltering acknowledgment of the Divine power. This crazy world is intent on saving itself by dethroning God. But, in that better day, to which I have referred, the conviction shall be universal, that the only safety of man consists in leaving God upon His throne.

To illustrate the absurdity of this atheistic doctrine of the Administration, we will suppose that, by a statute of Turkey, any person, Hungarian-born, ought to be kidnapped. Then, according to this atheistic doctrine, Capt. Ingraham had no right to rescue Koszta, for his kidnappers, in that case, were acting "under legal restraint."

Mr. SOLLERS, of Maryland. Mr. Chairman, what is the question before the House?

The CHAIRMAN, (Mr. ORR, of South Carolina.) Does the gentleman from Maryland rise to a question of order?

Mr. SOLLERS. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. What is the gentleman's question?

Mr. SOLLERS. I want to know what is the subject before the House?

The CHAIRMAN. The subject is the reference of the President's Message.

Mr. SOLLERS. The gentleman from New York is making an abolition speech, and I do not see its relevancy to the question before the House.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from New York is entitled to the floor, and he is in order.

Mr. SMITH. The gentleman from Maryland says, that I am making an abolition speech. I *am:* and I hope he will be patient under it. I, in my turn, will be patient under an *anti*-abolition speech.

But I will proceed in my illustrations of the absurdity of this atheistic doctrine of the Administration. What, too, if there were a statute of Turkey, declaring it right to kidnap any person, who is American-born? Then, according to this corrupt theology of the Administration, we should not be at liberty to rescue an American citizen, who might be kidnapped in Turkey. And what, too, if, acting under human authority, or, in the language of the Administration, "under legal restraint," the people of one of the Barbary States should kidnap Secretary Marcy, and even President Pierce himself—then, also, according to this God-dethroning doctrine of the Administration, our hands would be tied; and we should have no right to reclaim these distinguished men. The supposition, that such distinguished men can be kidnapped, is not absurd. The great Cervantes was a slave in one of the Barbary States. So, too, was the great Arago. And it is not beyond the pale of possibility, that even the great Secretary and the great President may yet be slaves. I am aware, that they, who stand up so stoutly for slavery, and for the multiplication of its victims, dream not, that they themselves can ever be its victims. They dream not, that this chalice, which they put to the lips of others, can ever be returned

to their own. And, yet, even this terrible retribution, or one still more terrible than any, which this life can afford, may be the retribution of such stupendous treachery and enmity to the human brotherhood. Little did Napoleon think, when, with perfidy unutterable, he had the noble but ill-fated Toussaint L'Ouverture carried across the waters, to perish in a prison,

> "That he himself, then greatest among men,
> Should, in like manner, be so soon conveyed
> Athwart the deep," *

to perish, also, in a prison.

In that great day (for which, as it has been sublimely said, all other days were made) when every man shall "receive the things done in his body," let me not be found of the number of those, who have wielded civil office to bind and multiply the victims of oppression. When I witness the tendency of power in human hands, be it civil or ecclesiastical, or any other power, to such perversion, I shrink from possessing it, lest I, too, might be tempted to lend it to the oppressor instead of the oppressed. "So I returned," says the wise man, "and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter: and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter."

I proceed to say, that this detestable doctrine of the Administration goes to blot all over that page of history, of which Americans are so proud. I mean that page, which records the famous achievement of Decatur and his brave companions in the Mediterranean. For it must be remembered, that the Algerine slaveholders, who were so severely chastised, and that, too, notwithstanding, being the most ignorant, they were the least guilty class of slaveholders—I say, it must be remembered, that these Algerine slaveholders acted under human Government, or, in the words of the Administration, "under legal restraint;" and were, therefore, according to the wisdom of the Administration, released from all obligation to do unto others, as they

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* Rogers's Italy.

would have others do unto them; and were at entire liberty to enslave Americans as well as other people.

I add, that this blasphemous doctrine of the Administration leaves unjustified, and utterly condemns, every war, which this nation has waged; for every such war has been against a people acting under the authority of their Government, or, in the language of the Administration, "under legal restraint." What if our enemy, in fighting against us, was guilty of fighting against God?—was guilty of trampling under foot the Divine law? Nevertheless, according to the sage teachings of the Administration, his guilt was overlaid with innocence, from the fact, that he was "acting under legal restraint." Surely, it will not be pretended, that *our* transgressions of the Divine law are excused by *our* "legal restraint," and that the like transgressions, on the part of others, cannot be excused by the like cause. Surely if we may put in the plea of "legal restraint" against Divine laws, so may others.

Alas, what a disgusting spectacle does the Administration present, in its deliberate corruption of the Bible, for the guilty purpose of sparing so abominable and vile a thing as slavery! Alas, what a pitiable spectacle of self-degradation does this nation present, in choosing such an Administration, and in remaining patient under it! And how rank, and broad, and glaring, is the hypocrisy upon the brow of this nation, who, whilst her feet are planted on the millions she has doomed to the horrors, and agonies, and pollutions of slavery, holds, nevertheless, in one hand, that precious, Heaven-sent volume, which declares, that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" and in the other, that emphatically American paper, which declares, that "all men are created equal!" And how greatly is the guilt of this nation, in her matchless oppressions, aggravated by the fact, that she owes infinitely more than ever did any other nation to Christianity, and liberty, and knowledge; and that she is, therefore, under infinitely greater obligation than was ever any other nation, to set an example, blessed in all its influences, both at home and abroad! Other nations began their existence in unfavorable circumstances. They laid their foundations in despotism, and ignorance, and superstition. But Christianity, and liberty,

and knowledge, waited upon the birth of this nation, and breathed into it the breath of life.

My hour is nearly up, and I will bring my remarks to a close. After all, the Administration has done us good service, in attempting to qualify the Divine command, to do unto others as we would have others do unto us; for, in attempting to do this for the sake of saving slavery, it has, by irresistible implication, admitted, that the command itself requires us to "let the oppressed go free."

This precious law of God contains, as they are wont to insist, ample authority for all the demands of the abolitionists—that despised class of men, to which I am always ready to declare, that I belong. Hence, the Administration, in quoting this law as the great rule of conduct between men, has, in no unimportant sense, joined the abolitionists. I say it has quoted this law—this naked law. I say so, not because I forget the words with which it attempted to qualify the law, but because, inasmuch as the law, which God has made absolute, man cannot qualify, these qualifying words fall to the ground, and leave the naked law in all its force. I admit, that the Administration did not quote this law for the sake of manifesting its union with the abolitionists; for, yet a while at least, it expects more advantage from its actual union with the slaveholders than it could expect from any possible union with the abolitionists. No; the Administration quoted this law for the sake of serving a purpose against Austria; and it flattered itself that, by means of a few qualifying words, it could shelter slavery from the force of the quotation. But, in this, it fell into a great mistake. Its greater mistake, however, was in presuming to quote the Bible at all. The Administration should have been aware that the Bible is a holy weapon, and is therefore fitted to anti-slavery, instead of pro-slavery, hands. It should have been aware, that it is more dangerous for pro-slavery men to undertake to wield this weapon, than it is for children to play with edge tools. The Bible can never be used in behalf of a bad cause, without detriment to such cause.

I conclude, Mr. Chairman, by expressing the hope, that this egregious blunder of the Administration, in calling the Bible to its help—a blunder, by the way, both as ludicrous and wicked as it is egregious—will, now that the blunder

is exposed, be not without its good effect, in the way of admonition. I trust, that this pro-slavery Administration, and, indeed, all pro-slavery parties and pro-slavery persons, will be effectually admonished by this blunder to let the Bible entirely alone, until they shall have some better cause than slavery to serve by it.